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LETTER DATED 16 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 15 March 1999 addressed to you by Mr. Tariq Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, concerning violations of Iraqi laws committed by staff members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-07275 (E) 170399 170399

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Annex

Letter dated 15 March 1999 from the Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

As staff members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies were leaving Iraq on 23 February 1999, the customs authorities at the Qadisiyah border complex at Trebil found in the possession of Ms. Daniela Mangione, an observer with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 10 Iranian rugs that were concealed among her personal effects for the purpose of smuggling them out of the country. She was informed by the customs authorities that such items were contraband and that legal proceedings would have to be taken against her. In keeping with the spirit of transparency and cooperation shown by Iraq to staff members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies working in the country, she was allowed to leave Iraq.

Since the memorandum of understanding of 20 May 1996 between Iraq and the United Nations Secretariat was first put into effect, we have been confronted with many actions and practices on the part of those working for the United Nations specialized agencies that do not accord with the custom of respecting the law of the land, and they have included smuggling contraband items out of Iraq.

Mr. Taha Yasin Ramadan, Vice-President of Iraq, raised the question of customs violations and the smuggling of items out of Iraq with Mr. Benon V. Sevan, Executive Director of the Iraq Programme, at their meeting on 2 July 1998 in Baghdad.

The smuggling of contraband items out of Iraq, particularly in the circumstances created by the iniquitous embargo that has been maintained against the country for more than eight years, is an act that is both morally and legally unacceptable. Accordingly, we hope that you will intervene by issuing instructions to those staff members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies who work in Iraq to the effect that they are required to respect and to comply with Iraqi laws.

(Signed) Tariq AZIZ
Deputy Prime Minister
Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Iraq